

LIFE IN THE CHURCH.

ALVIN BYERS.

When I look around in the winter and see the great air purifier—the life-giving and invigorating powers of the atmosphere; and the beautiful, white snow that covers and keeps warm the various roots of the nature's clothing that spring up and come forth with beautiful garments as the sun drives the frost and powers of winter beyond the western hills, and as he goes he paints each dewdrop, each morning-glory, and other flowers with a cloak equal if not superior to that of "Solomon in all his glory." We should be ready to bow our heads to him that sits upon the throne in heaven, and thank him, at this the beginning of another New Year for these powers of nature from which we get food and clothing to sustain the life of this earthly body which the Lord has given us. But when I look around in the church and see the great religious purifier—the plan of salvation and other life-giving powers of Christianity—powers that drive away strife and indifference, and makes those people tremble in their shoes who are escorted to the front pews to make and breed disturbance, to fight the powers of GOD'S PEOPLE, and to draw the reins on the preacher, and cut and slash him because he can't pull quite so fast (but does more work in the end) as those who are fluent speakers and have every thing at the tongue's end, and are very often led off by the flattery and praise of the people, and nine cases out of ten they never do any good.

This calls to my mind a church parade I read about some time ago. The whole church was in one carriage. The deacons were in the front seat and the would-be deacons on the second seat, and the remaining seats were filled with the congregation who were complaining about driving too slow and hunching the deacons on the front seat to drive a little faster, and the deacons with willing hands commenced to beat the preacher whom they had hitched up in the shafts to do the pulling; it was not long until the preacher was over-worked and he stalled. The deacons unhitched him and placed another preacher in the shafts and he got bawky and by kicking he almost ruined the carriage (the church.) My prayer is, that by the assistance of Almighty grace, and the united efforts of every congregation in the Brethren church, we may go on to perfection, "and hold fast to that which is good," each congregation upholding their pastor in his labors, and be as the snow is to the roots of the plants a protection and a warmth to the youth that they may grow up in the nurture and ad-

monition of the Lord, and be as a mighty oak in the beautiful forest of the Master, and the church, in the spring-time of youth.

"GONE"

(Read at the North Georgetown Brethren Sunday School entertainment, Dec. 25, 1895, by M. F. Heestand.)

Well may we ask ourselves this evening *what* is gone? Am I not the same that I was one year ago to-night? Have any opportunities for good passed by unimproved and are now gone forever to stand against us at the great tribunal? Have we failed to give the helping hand or that word of cheer and encouragement to our brother who is in the whirlpool of sin and folly and who looked to us for help and relief? if so, then another sentence has gone down in the book of God's remembrance for our condemnation. Then, Oh! then, may we well ponder this subject for a few minutes.

Three hundred and sixty-five days have come and gone since last we met at this place on a similar occasion. As the dawn breaks forth from the eastern horizon, followed gently by the welcome light of the approaching day, so each day brought its new hopes and new desires for all.

To some it may have brought hopes of gaining a greater advantage of unfairness over their fellowmen or of forcing their brother farther down the precipice of perdition and woe.

Others, yes many others we trust, have had desires (and carried them into effect) to lift fallen humanity to a higher plane of life, to a truer realization of the purpose for which God created them.

It is a calm, fragrant summer morning. You are out to witness the panorama of the approaching day. Darkness is yet over the land. Erelong in the thicket yonder, you hear a faint chirp; soon another is heard to your left and then another on your right. But look! In the east there is a faint light, a glimmering as it were of brighter realities. Listen! Now the groves and thickets about you are alive with little throats, twittering, chirping, singing; each offering its praise and adoration to the Lord of the universe. The darkness is fading, beams of light are piercing it as it recedes from the eastern horizon as if to hurry it along. Yonder streaming through the distant forest, we catch the first beam of the rising sun and another bright and beautiful day is upon us.

Thus is the life of the Christian. At first, all is darkness and gloom; by and by he hears a faint chirp of a better and happier life. He looks about; in the distance by faith he sees a dim light. If

he approach it, it will become brighter and brighter. He starts; the chirpings have become more frequent and sweeter; the light becomes more real; the darkness is driven back from his horizon. Ere-long through the forest of doubt, he catches the first glimpse of the Son of Righteousness and his whole soul is filled with praises and thanksgivings. His life becomes a new day so that his words, his actions and his deeds are the outpouring of his soul filled with adoration for his Savior, the Redeemer of all mankind; His life a light to his fellowmen that they may see there is a blessed reality in living and working for Jesus and thereby be led to live Christ lives.

The three hundred and sixty-five days that are passed and gone, have not all been bright days. To one, yesterday may have been dark and gloomy; while to another, some other day has been clouded and drear. The little shooting twig by the side of the mighty forest trees may have been torn root and stem from the earth by some passing beast and dropped to the earth to wither and die; or that majestic oak standing yonder on the brow of the hill, that oak that has stood through the storms and tempests of a thousand years, has been torn from his defiable position only to be caught by another earth on whose bosom he shall moulder back to the dust of the valley. The young and the aged have thus been called from our right and our left to meet their Lord.

God, our father, in his mercy and love has spared us. We are not gone. But we venture the assertion that not one here to-night who has not left pass golden opportunities to do good. It may have been in the office, in the store-room, in the school, in the home or in the church and Sunday-school. Wherever it may have been they are gone, gone. Shall we sit and mourn for them? Oh no! To-day, to-night, the grandest day of days is the time to begin anew. Not to make new resolutions and let them smoulder out in the furnace of inactivity, but form, and act, and keep them burning bright in the fire of duty.

Do this and those of us who through God's providence are here a year hence will have made one step in advance in the footsteps of Christ. Do this and those of us who shall be called to try the realities of another world, who shall have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death and who shall pass over the Jordan of death, will have the assurance of the presence of our Savior who will conduct us safely to our heavenly home.

North Georgetown, Ohio.